



# Conservation Conversations

Division of Conservation  
Department for Natural Resources  
Energy and Environment Cabinet

Issue 15

## Presidential Comments

My fellow conservation district supervisors,

The KACD directors, along with the Division of Conservation staff, are hard at work planning our 69<sup>th</sup> annual convention. We have invited several special guests to speak about a variety of topics that we hope will help supervisors across Kentucky better carry out their responsibilities.

Our new Agriculture Commissioner James Comer will be coming to speak with us about his vision for the future of agriculture in Kentucky. Ray Archuleta will be coming in from North Carolina to talk about soil health, a very important topic for all of us. We'll also have a lis-

tening session about the Field Office of the Future. The popular break-out sessions will be available on Monday afternoon. Supervisors and employees will have the opportunity to discuss topics such as agriculture districts, water quality, energy and cover crops.

Of course, one of the great benefits of our convention is the ability to share thoughts and ideas about our conservation programs. Between sessions, supervisors and employees have a unique opportunity to share with each other what has and hasn't worked in their counties. This can be an advantageous time to talk with the supervisors from another

county to find out how they promote the art and writing contest or how they managed to get on a millage tax. If your county is thinking about starting a local cost share or getting involved with shared use equipment, this is a perfect time to ask someone else how they did it.

Please join us July 29 – 31 at the downtown Marriott in Louisville for three days of fellowship and learning.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the KACD Board of Directors, to the partnership staff and each of you as district supervisors or directors for your confidence and support during my four years as your state association presi-

dent. A lot has been accomplished and we face new challenges and opportunities in the future. As KACD is choosing its new leadership for the next two years, I have faith in our organization to make excellent decisions for the increased strength of the locally led conservation district program across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,  
Jeff Rice  
KACD President

## District Employee Training

On Oct. 25, 2011, 11 conservation district employees from eight counties came together for a conservation district employee's meeting. The meeting was hosted by DOC Field Representative Shanna Drake at the Butler County Cooperative Extension Service office and began

with training and discussion about the District in Good Standing program. The group discussed questions and issues concerning report submissions, insurance coverage and authorized check signers.

Alecia Hillard, program as-

sistant with the Butler County Cooperative Extension Service, gave an excellent presentation about creating a Facebook organization fan page. Hillard had detailed packets available and walked through the steps as she created a page.

District employees in attendance included Debbie Cardwell, Ryan Pendley, Connie Mills, Robin Decker, Dianna Penrod, Wesley Wright, Monica Wood, Cindy Carwile, Stephanie Carden, Barbara Swindler and Marsha Marklin.

## Food For America

Caldwell County third-graders learned how farmers impact the lives of their community in today's modern world. The national Future Farmers of America (FFA) project Food for America, an educational program focusing on agricultural literacy in elementary schools, encourages FFA students and teachers to share agricultural experiences with children in their community.

The local version of the Food for America campaign was established in 1979 and has resulted in annual trips to farms for third-graders for over 30 years. In Caldwell County third-graders spent two days learning about how food gets from the farm to their kitchen.

One-half of the children began the day at Hancock's Neighborhood Market, where they explored the various departments. High school agriculture teachers Christy Lancaster and Wes York presented food facts as the students made their way through the aisles of vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy products

and bread.

The students then traveled to Linda and Elbert Bennett's beef cattle farm in Fredonia where they learned about agriculture. Elbert Bennett spoke with the students about his cattle operations and the everyday workings of a farm. Danny Sherrill talked about safety around animals, cattle care in the winter and livestock vaccinations. Buddy York showed the children antique farm equipment. Joni Phelps explained how much work there is in making some of our food, such as butter. Odell Walker demonstrated how to produce corn meal with a century-old grist mill and gave the children an opportunity to shell corn with a hand-operated sheller. Renee Laurent showed the children her pigs and talked about animal safety and ear notching. Bill and Chris Kass brought alpacas and products made from alpaca hair for the children to see. Donnie Boone showed the children a cemetery on the farm that dated back to the 1800s and talked about the history

of the farm.

The field trip then moved to Akridge Farm Supply in Fredonia, where the students toured the chemical room and learned about how farmers use the products from the store in food production.

Meanwhile in the classroom, the other half of the students spent time with FFA members. Chase Howton talked about tractor safety and the dangers of the hydraulics on tractors. Olivia Bloodworth and Shelby Rogers used a video to show the children how soybeans are used in our everyday lives.

On the second day, the children switched groups so that the classroom students went on the field trip and vice versa. In addition to Caldwell County Conservation District personnel helping with the field rotations, the district also supports this important program financially.

## Ellison Honored As Outstanding Conservation District Board Member of the Year

Dan Ellison from Graves County is the current National Conservation District Employees Association's (NCDEA) Outstanding Conservation District Board Member of the Year. He was presented this award at the 2012 NCDEA annual conference earlier this year.

Ellison has served for 20 years as a Graves County Conservation District board member. As a local conservation leader, Ellison has served on numerous local boards to represent the district and has served as both chairman and vice chairman for his local district board. He works closely with local elected officials and is active with local colleges, businesses and industry. He also

serves on the local Farm Service Agency county committee.

Ellison has served as an area state director to the Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts and is currently serving as the association's vice president. He is active on various committees and state association sponsored events such as the annual legislative dinner, state conventions and workshops, and the annual



*Dan Ellison with Connie Richmeier, president of the National Conservation District Employees Association, (left) and Karen Woodrich, state conservationist.*

legislative trip to Washington, D.C. Ellison recently completed service as vice president of the state Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) and as regional vice president for RC&D.

Ellison continues to support and encourage the district employees association in their meetings and training workshops.

## Carlisle County Agriculture Day

The Carlisle County Cooperative Extension Service hosted the 2011 Agriculture Day on Jan. 25, 2012, for the third-grade students at Carlisle County Elementary. The students visited 11 stations to learn about grain safety, ATV safety, corn production, electrical safety, soybean production, the cattle industry, shop safety, poultry production, methamphetamine use, plastics made from corn and soils. Visitors from several agencies and commodity groups spent the day sharing their knowledge about production and safety with the students to increase their agricultural knowledge.

The Carlisle County Conservation District presented their station on soil and how the earth's food supply comes from a very limited area of the earth. NRCS District Conservationist John Shely demonstrated the area of the planet that is available for food production by carving an apple. He also shared a soil profile involving a live earthworm with the children.



*Shely (left) demonstrates the amount of soil available for food production by using an apple. The soil core used at the station can be seen on the table.*

## Environmental Education Scholarships

Many conservation districts in Kentucky offer college, continuing education and environmental camp scholarships. These scholarships provide opportunities for districts to promote conservation through higher education in agriculture or natural resource areas and the means for younger students to participate in environmental education camps. Most districts do not have the capability to fully fund a student's full college tuition, and with the current economic situation, every dollar directed toward higher education becomes very important to recipients in acquiring their degree. The funds

awarded by districts in these areas enable some students the means to further their educational goals and some the ability to participate in hands on environmental education projects. Without these funds, some course studies may be significantly reduced or unattainable by high tuition costs, expense of living on campus, cost of class materials, books and registration fees.

The Mary Chandler Memorial Scholarship, sponsored by the Lawrence County Conservation District, has enabled 10 students in Lawrence County to further their education in the fields of natural resources or agriculture. The dis-

trict began awarding the \$1,000 scholarship in June 2002 in an effort to continue Chandler's lifelong goal of promoting conservation through higher education. Chandler was an educator, the first woman to receive the statewide forestry award and a former member of the Lawrence County Conservation District Board. To date the scholarship program has awarded \$10,000 in an effort to honor Chandler's goal and expand the promotion of conservation education in Lawrence County by helping students achieve their educational goals in either an agriculture or natural resource area.

## Area 1 Spring Meeting

The KACD Area 1 spring meeting was held on Feb. 29, 2012, at Lee Jones Park in Eddyville, Ky. Over 55 conservation district supervisors, district employees, NRCS personnel and other agency people listened to the morning reports from Steve Coleman, director of the Division of Conservation, and Karen Woodrich, state conservationist from Kentucky NRCS, as well as comments from KACD Vice Chairman Dan Ellison, KACD Area 1 Director Rod Murphy, Area 1 Soil and Water Conser-

vation Commissioner Scotty Parsons and KACDE President Brian Hacker.

A highlight of the morning was the recognition of the Area 1 KACD master conservationist. David Hite from Trigg County was recognized as the first KACD Area 1 master conservationist. Hite was humble and thankful for the recognition and for the help he had received from the conservation district and NRCS in assisting him with his farming operation.

Parsons also recognized William "Bill" Claxton, supervisor from Christian County. Claxton passed away in late February 2012. Claxton served on the Christian County Conservation District Board for over 40 years as well as other organizations in Christian County. He will be missed not only from Christian County but from KACD Area 1.

## Field Representatives Provide Annual Training

The Division of Conservation's field representatives provide annual training sessions to conservation district employees in their assigned group of counties. This atmosphere provides for a much smaller and informal gathering allowing for more freedom and openness during the discussion of topics. These training opportunities are a vital resource for conservation district personnel, since they address training needs that are relevant to a particular area. They also create an environment that serves as a communication developer and builds a strong support line among districts. The agenda topics covered are an important part of district operations and cover subject matter that will improve day-to-day operations, aid in providing assistance to landowners and encourage the promotion of environmental education. With the opportunity to network with other districts, participants gain valuable insight on increasing conservation educational activities, information on resources that have proven successful and

the chance to provide input on specific program trainings needs.

Pam Williams held her Area 8 district employees training session at the Magoffin County Extension office in Salyersville. An invitation to attend was also extended to district employees from a portion of Area 9 since those employees do not currently have a field representative assigned to them. A total of 23 district employees took part in the training representing 19 of the 23 counties in the two-field representative area. Assisting with the training session was Division of Conservation Director Steve Coleman who provided comments and updates on the Districts in Good Standing policy, state budget issues and concerns, and the state cost share program. Coleman also received and addressed many good questions and comments from the district personnel. Training and guidance on Agriculture Water Quality Plan assistance was also covered by Extension Water Quality Liaison Amanda Gumbert. Gumbert's presentation focused on the updated planning tool available via web for water quality plan completion and the role that conservation district staff will play in assisting landowners in completing their plans. Williams provided an overview of the Districts in Good Standing report form, retaining supporting documentation, information and security awareness, responsibilities of the conservation district staff, Quickbooks chart of accounts and the introduction of a new district budget form. Each year these training sessions are increasingly more essential for district employees as regulations and policies dictate their obligations to ensure taxpayer dollars are managed accurately and effectively in the realm of their duties. The Division of Conservation and the field representative staff will continue to be a vital resource for training opportunities that assists the local conservation districts and their staff in meeting the highest accountability standards required by law.

## Mercer County Arbor Day Tree Planting

On April 27, the Mercer County Conservation District hosted their annual Arbor Day celebration held at the new Mercer County High School. This is the second year the tree planting has been held.

The newly built high school had no landscaping, so the district saw the opportunity to promote conservation and involve students at the same time. Each year on Arbor Day the district plants a large tree in honor of the first-grade class. FFA members plant the tree and establish what will become a garden with a walking trail. The district plants only trees that were native to Mercer County. This year they

planted a Red Maple for the graduating class of 2023. Each tree will be identified with a marker that states the species and graduating class.

More than 230 first-graders were present along with Division of Forestry's Jody Benningfield who kicked off the ceremony. The Mercer County Board of Education was present and was pleased to work with the conservation district. The school board stressed that the great ideas and hard work of the district staff made this celebration possible. The conservation district hopes to continue this successful program for years to come.





## West Liberty Service Center Hosts Boy Scout Troop 109

On Feb. 17 the Morgan County USDA Service Center hosted Boy Scout Troop 109 from West Liberty. These seven young men were in pursuit of their Citizenship in the Nation badge. This badge requires the troop to understand this nation's history, participate in activities that support responsible active citizenship within their communities, know their rights and responsibilities in the legislative process, and understand the importance of protecting and defending their nation and individual rights. Troop Leader Danny McKenzie said, "With the community support this troop has received and the commitment these boys have put forth participating in activities that will provide them with skills and knowledge that promote excellent citizenship, they have a bright future, and I appreciate the agencies



taking the time to work with our troop to achieve our goals."

The Morgan County Service Center agencies include USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm

Service Agency, Morgan County Conservation District and Division of Conservation. Each agency provided an overview of their legislative enactment, community services provided by each agency, the importance of being good stewards of our land and the many career opportunities that one could pursue as a federal, state or county employee. The service center agency personnel were honored to assist the young men with their personal development in achieving their goals as they mature into future leaders.

## Perry County's Recycling Center

Perry County now has a new electronics recycling center, thanks to the Perry County Conservation District and the Perry County Fiscal Court. The building, located next to the county maintenance garage, was constructed for approximately \$20,000, a cost that was shared between the two groups. Judge-Executive Denny Ray Nobel thanked the conservation district board for their support and stressed that this center

will allow Perry County's residents to dispose of many items that would otherwise be sent to a landfill.

Nearly any type of electronics item can be recycled through this center. District Chairman Bobby Brown said, "We'll take just about anything that's got a plug on it." Solid Waste Coordinator Rosa Couch did note that only electronics can be accepted at the new facility. Any other recyclables should be

taken to another recycling facility.

The new recycling center will be open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for drop off. The conservation district board is excited for the future of recycling in their area and agrees that this is definitely a step in the right direction for the citizens of Perry County.

## 2012 Progressive Agriculture Safety Day Training in Owensboro

On Feb. 23 and 24, 2012, Lee Ann Daugherty, Butler County ag teacher, and Shanna Drake, DOC field representative, attended the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day training in Owensboro. This program, which teaches basic safety precautions, can help children and their families to live a safer life on the farm. Approximately 15 individuals from Ohio, Ill., and various

regions in Kentucky participated in the training geared toward coordinators who plan a Progressive Agriculture Safety Day. The training consisted of in-depth coverage of the Progressive Agriculture Foundation website, forms, planning procedures and hands on tools for coordinating a successful event.

Daugherty and Drake feel that farm-related safety is something that the

students of Butler County will be able to relate to. As the majority of Butler County is agricultural, the information provided at the program could help Butler County's farm families work safer.

## How Your Field Representative Can Help You

Conservation districts across Kentucky have found it increasingly difficult to find the funding that they need to carry out their programs. With budget cuts on the state and local level, districts are having to utilize their resources in order to maintain their stability and viability in their respective communities. One of these resources available to the districts is the Division of Conservation (DOC) field representative appointed to each specific district. Each representative is a vital asset to both conservation district employees and the local board of supervisors in day-to-day operations.

The field representative's main objective is to be a liaison between the Division of Conservation (DOC) in Frankfort and the local conservation district. When questions or problems arise, a district should call on the field representative to find quick solutions or answers. Each statewide program that the districts participate in has its own guidelines and rules. The field representatives are knowledgeable about what avenues to take to find the quickest solution to issues with these programs. This makes them a valuable tool, as they can help the district get the information needed directly.

Another of the field representative's duties is to keep the local board of supervisors informed of any changes to DOC programs or new and upcoming programs or events. Each month, the board of supervisors should be prepared to ask any questions they may have for the field representative during the monthly meeting. It is important to the Division of Conservation to have the representative present for these meetings for this very reason; however, due to budget restrictions, it may be necessary for them to be present via conference call on occasion. In either of these scenarios, the board will still have equal opportunity to voice their concerns and hopefully find answers to any problems that might have arisen with the district or DOC.

Promotion of the Division of Conservation and local conservation districts is also a top priority of the field representatives. They prepare articles for this and other publications. They also assist districts with displays, presentations and other means of district promotion on the local and state level. Local districts should keep them informed of any accomplishments or new and innovative ideas dealing with conservation so that these can be shared with other districts across the state through these articles.

One of the main goals of all of the field representatives is to make sure that each district can be positive and self-sustaining. As your field representative attends programs and functions of other districts, they are noting projects that could work in your district. They also want to make sure that your district is receiving the most possible funding for your programs, so they may make suggestions to maximize the district's income, such as changing policies to comply with the Districts in Good Standing program or working with the local Agricultural Development Board to fund programs.

Field representatives travel to each district as much as they are able within their budgetary restrictions. Local conservation districts can still utilize them, however, through technology such as email, conference calling, net meetings, etc. With changing times, we are forced to change the way we do business and your conservation field representative should always be a major piece of the puzzle in the district's goal to promote conservation.

## Bullitt County's Farm Day

Over 300 third-graders were present at the Bullitt County Extension Office on April 19 for the annual agricultural day that is sponsored by multiple agencies in the county. The Bullitt County Conservation District feels that this is one of their more important activities throughout the year because it can impact so many young students and teaches the importance of agriculture and farm life.

This year there were stations sponsored by the Corn Growers Association, conservation district, Cattleman's Association and Bullitt County Homemakers' Clubs, as well as visits to a greenhouse and orchard. The students made but-

ter, milked a cow, learned how food is grown in a greenhouse, shipped and processed. At the conservation district's station, students learned the importance of soil and the history of the dust bowl. The district also helped each student plant a green bean seedling to take home.

Conservation district board members assist with this field day each year, and they are continually amazed at the number of students that know little about agriculture or make the direct



connection about where their food comes from. The district considers this event a great success and hopes to continue for years to come.